

[Penetrating the moment](#)

LIFE IS THE UNIVERSE. It is the huge expanse of space and time. It needs no explanation. But if I don't say anything, you won't understand.

You exist at the intersection of time and space. This is your place. Although there are countless other such intersections, all these countless intersections come together in such a way that we can't separate out any single location. So a location is not really a location. Each location already completely occupies the vast expanse of time and space. This is the universe as One. This is where we live.

So, what should we do? That is, how are we best to live our lives? Well, we can't just sit down. We have to do something, because there are two aspects to the universe that are always present. One is stillness; the other is dynamic working. They are one Truth.

Dogen said we must penetrate *this moment*, again and again, forever. This is the most important thing we can do. There is nothing to change, nothing to hold on to, nothing to get caught by. All we have to do is constantly approach *this very moment* with a true heart. But this is not so easy.

How, for example, can we deal with a person who is certain to die soon and is now suffering terrible, unimagin-

able pain? Whenever we try to deal with such a problem by using some idea or rule, or by using our emotions, we create problems. All we can do is go into *this moment* with full awareness and do our best to deal with it as it is.

A man traveling in India came upon some people sitting around a cow that was about to die. He looked at the cow, and then he looked at the people and said, "Please don't just sit there looking at the cow's suffering. Shoot her as soon as possible. I don't want to see her suffer." But the people said to him, "No. Just sit here with us and watch." This seems pretty odd, but it is a very direct teaching. We can't eliminate suffering; it goes on. We don't understand intellectually what death is, or what life is, because our thoughts can't get a grip on them. If we try to touch life, it is not really life, and if we try to touch death, it is not death. If in desperation we grab for mercy killing, it is not real death that we grasp but only our fears and ideas of death.

We have to take care of death as it is. Real death can only be faced directly. To do this we have to come into this moment. Death is not an idea. This is why real death makes us suffer, particularly when it is at a little distance. Seeing someone die scares us, because it is not really another's death. It is our death.

In the United States we try to take care of people who are dying by giving them a lot of attention. Then, when

we send the dead body to the mortuary for preparation and to be put in a casket, we believe this is death. But this is not death. Death is never apart from life. So even while the person is still alive, we have to see death. Even now it is within us. We are all marching toward death.

We are in the universe—the Whole—regardless of whether we are aware of it or not. All we have to do is just live there. How? Without attaching to life or death, just being present in each moment. We can't attach to either because they are both always present at once. If you can stand up in *this moment* with a true heart, immediately you will experience true affirmation of yourself as the Whole. But in the next moment, you have to let that experience go.

Letting it go is returning, once again, to *this moment* as it is. Then the next moment appears just as it is, and you can face it, naturally, with freshness of mind. But if

you don't return to *this moment*, the real moment will not appear. You will just be caught up in your idea of the moment. You will never totally participate in it; you will never accept *this moment* as completely new. You will be stuck in your thoughts, your memories, and your preferences, which bubble up from your mind and cause you to waver.

As simply as you can, you have to just stand up in *this moment*, and then let it go. Then you can be in this moment, and you can be in the next. It's just like breathing in and out. If you exhale completely, you inhale in the next moment. And when you finish inhaling, exhaling comes next. This occurs naturally, even before you're conscious of it. Inhalation and exhalation work together as one. So stand up in *this moment* and experience it totally; then just let it go. Let each new moment come up fresh, just as it is. To do this constantly is our practice.